



United States Department of State
Bureau of Human Resources

COUNTING ON FAMILY DURING SEPARATION



**A SPECIAL BOOK ABOUT ME & MY FAMILY
BY:**



UNACCOMPANIED TOURS SUPPORT

**Published by the U.S. Department of State
Family Liaison Office 2008
Washington D.C.**
Through the generosity of the Una Chapman Cox Foundation
Original design and text by Kim S. Leong Spivak, Ph.D. 2007
Do not copy or reproduce without prior permission from FLO

COUNTING ON FAMILY DURING SEPARATION

CONTENTS

Note to Parents.....	5-7
Using This Manual.....	5
About Play and Story Telling	6
Supplies and Shopping list	7
 Things to Do Before Daddy/Mommy Goes	 8-24
Who:	
My Family Tree	9
People who take care of me.	13
 Where:	
Where I live now:	17
Where Daddy/Mommy will live.....	19
 What:	
Watch Me Grow	21
My list for the family meeting.....	23
 Things To Do While Daddy/Mommy is Gone.....	 25-82
Where Daddy/Mommy lives Now.....	27
Numbers: Calendar, Clock, Time, Phone	29
Letters.	39
Colors.	45
Shapes.....	49
Feelings.....	55
Needs	63
Things to Make	65
Things to Do and Send	69
Things to Play with Family	79
 Things to Do for Homecoming	 83-96
Before homecoming	85
After homecoming.....	91
 Templates	 97

HELPING YOUR CHILD STAY CONNECTED

A Note for Parents



Early childhood is an amazing time of growth that can be both trying and exciting for parents. While your traveling spouse might not miss some of the more taxing moments, they will certainly want to share in your child's progress and delights. This manual is designed to help the child identify with the "away" parent by bringing him/her to mind in the different aspects of everyday life.






Because children develop at different rates and show individual preferences, a wide variety of activities are provided. Pick and/or modify the activities that most fit your child's level and interest. They will need assistance from you; parental instructions are provided in dialogue boxes on the backside of the activity sheet. You are encouraged to expand on the activities. Variations on the tasks are suggested where applicable.

Most young children can attend to a task for 5-10 minutes at a time; go at *their* pace and follow *their* lead. It works best if the activities are spaced out over the duration of the separation. Should you need more advanced activities, these are provided in a follow-on manual for school-aged children, available from FLO. Each child in your family should have their own manual. Gather the items that are sent back and forth from your spouse in this binder so each child can have a complete album by the time Dad/Mom comes home.

The Appendices located in the separate Parent and Employee's Manuals contain additional family information, resources, and checklists that are not repeated here.

About Play

Play is the main avenue that young children use to express themselves and to incorporate their ever-expanding world. At ages 4-6, play becomes more interactive and role oriented (as opposed to the “parallel” play of younger years). It is common for play to reflect the experiences and concerns that occupy a child’s day. As you observe your child, watch for the following common themes or elements:

-  **Power and Control:** Good guys vs. bad guys, winning vs. losing, destruction.
-  **Relationships and Authority:** Mommy-daddy-child, teacher-student, sibling, peer-peer, boy-girl.
-  **Rules of Engagement and Competition:** Being right, good, or in control of rules.
-  **Magical Thinking:** Anthropomorphizing inanimate objects, space- and time-warps.
-  **Ego-centrism:** Seeing things only from their own point of view.









Make a mental note of your child’s general mood while engaged in recurring themes that might be artifacts of the separation. For example, watch how the characters in a relationship work out conflicts or changes in roles when one authority figure leaves. If certain themes worry you, talk it over with your child later in a matter-of-fact manner. Be cautious of over interpreting or passing judgment over play actions. Remember the child is playing out both sides of a situation – it is better to ask him/her what a particular action means rather than to assume that he/she identifies with a certain figure or motive.

Enrich your child’s play arena by incorporating items sent from post and allowing them to wear parents’ clothes and shoes. A box of dress-up things including native clothes from other countries fires the imagination of both boys and girls; even children who don’t like dress-up enjoy role-playing with interesting items from overseas. Don’t be surprised if the egg-beater from Sudan becomes a laser-firing weapon!

About Story Telling













Making up stories is a wonderful way for parents to engage their child. It requires only your creativity and time; there are no rules except to enjoy the time together. Let your imagination wander and allow your child to embellish the tale as you go along. Take advantage of your child’s magical thinking to create characters out of things that your child likes, e.g., construction vehicles, dogs, dolls, etc. If you’re really stuck for inspiration, look around the environment and start there, e.g., “Once there was a lamp in a room. Every day he looked out the window and wondered....”

Ideas for this Age Group:

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
|  Food |  Toys |  He’s bugging me.. |
|  No fair! |  Animals |  But it’s mine! |
| |  You’re not the boss of me! |  When I grow up... |







Equipment and Handy Supplies:




-  Digital Camera: if you don't have one, now would be a really good time to invest in one!
-  Computer: preferably one with good speakers/printer/web camera/high-speed internet access
-  Video or cassette recorder
-  Telephone
-  Non-Toxic colored crayons: chubby size
-  Washable, non-toxic colored markers: chubby size
-  Rough paper for scribbling: tearing an old phone book works well!
-  Old magazines
-  Non-toxic glue stick
-  Tape
-  Scissors
-  3-hole punch





Shopping List:

-  Simple children's books: hard or soft board and terry books
-  Two copies of longer books: one to leave with child, the other for employee to take and record
-  A set each of A-B-C, 1-2-3 flashcards: preferably colorful and/or with pictures.
-  Small tape recorder and blank cassettes: if you don't have one
-  A sturdy, childproof tape player
-  Transitional object: a comforting item that helps to soothe transition states (e.g., from wakefulness to sleep, or from being together to being alone). It might be a:
 - Blanket
 - Soft toy
 - Dad/Mom shirt or pillow that smells like Dad/Mom
 - Dad/Mom's photo (see Parent Manual Appendix B for personalized items)
 - A cut-out of Dad/Mom's handprint that Dad/Mom kissed
 - Mirror superimposed with Dad/Mom's transparency

FROM POST: Besides e-mails, photos, letters, ask spouse to send from time to time...

-  **Small Items of Interest:** coins, paper money of different denominations, cloth, local newspaper, local sweets, beads, pins, badges, ribbons, charms, flag, etc.

-  **Items of local clothing:** male and female for dress up

-  **Children's books:** in the local language



Things to Do Before Dad/Mom Goes:



My Family Tree

Where I live Now

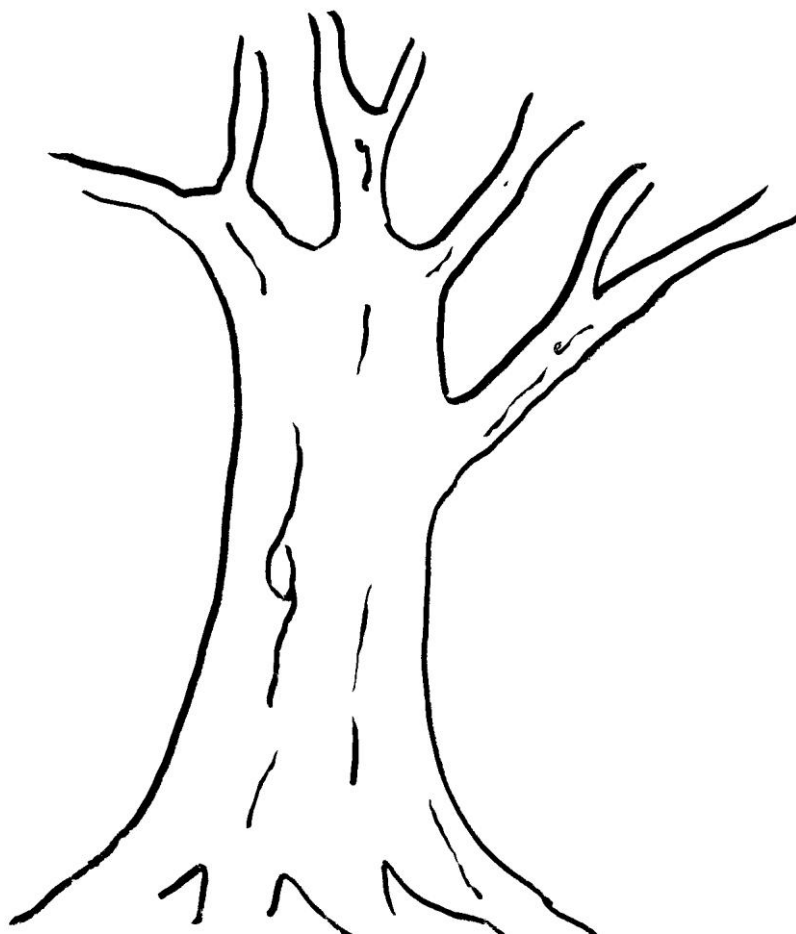
Where Daddy/Mommy is going

People who take care of Me

Watch me Grow!

My List for the Family Meeting

My Family Tree



My Family Tree



Aim:

To reinforce a sense of belonging to a larger family; to identify members by name and relationship.

Parents:

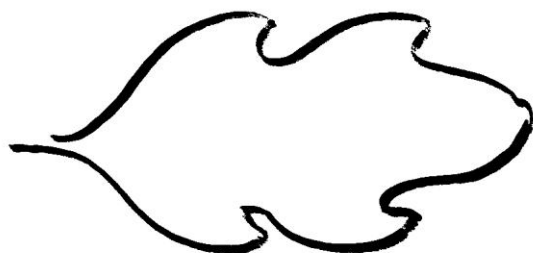
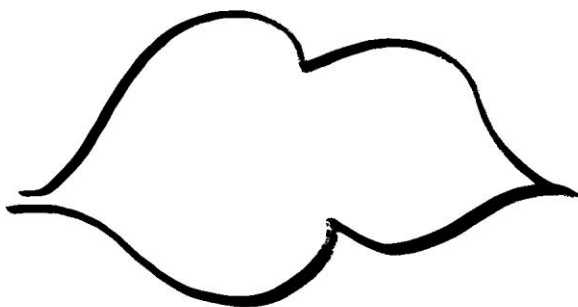
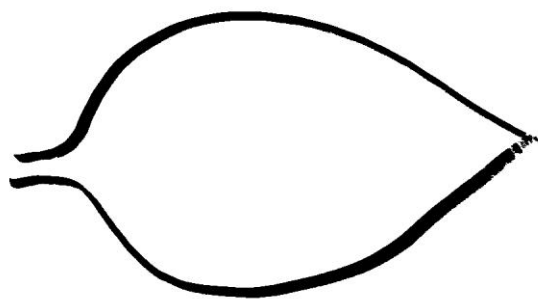
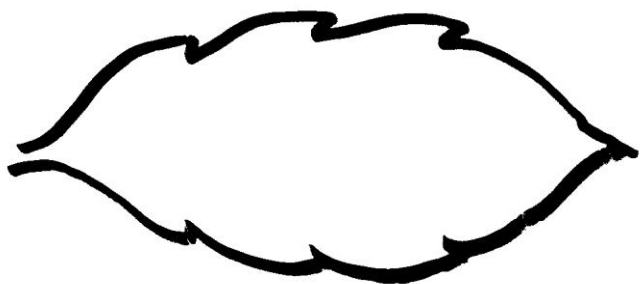
Use the Tree and Leaf outlines to help your child make a family tree. He/she can write names or draw each family member on separate leaves and stick these on the tree (use leaf template in Appendix if you need extra). Photos can also be used. Add acorns for unborn siblings, or pets under the tree.

Dialogue: Explain how your family members are connected. Talk about how trees grow and change over time but always remains connected through the root.

You'll need:

Colors, glue or tape, scissors

Leaves and Acorns for My Family Tree





People Who Take Care of Me



I have many people who care for me!

People Who Take Care of Me



Aim:

To reassure your child that he/she will be well cared for now and during separation.

Parents:

Help identify people that your child sees everyday that they can turn to if they need anything. Ask your child to draw a picture of them doing something with the child.

Variation: Use additional sheets, if necessary, to draw other settings where your child spends a lot of time: e.g., day-care, grandmother's house, etc.

Dialogue:

Talk about all the different people who care about your child and explain that they can be relied upon to help. Give names. Emphasize that they will not be left alone and are part of a larger, loving network. Listen for any worries that come up; give reassurance.

You'll need:

Colors (optional: photos, adhesive)

Is it OK?

It's OK if I ask someone else besides Mommy and Daddy for help?



My helpers:

Name	Number
Name	Number
Name	Number

In case I don't know what to say to them, I can use this code word, and they will know to help me:

Secret Code Word: _____

Needs: is it OK?

Aim:

To give your child an easy way to ask some one else for support.

Parents:

Children need permission to go to other grown-ups or families and you need extra support to help while your spouse is away. With young children, support systems must be familiar and accessible in order to be useful. So don't wait for an emergency to develop before your child engages his/her support people.

1. Identify the people your child feels most comfortable going to if they need extra help; write down their names and numbers. These people may be different from those appearing in your emergency contact list.
2. Show them how they might contact these people if needed (e.g., phone, or go to the neighbor's house).
3. Ask him/her to pick a code word that will be used to signal "I need you to listen to me right now." Avoid using emergency words like "fire" or "danger." Practice using the code word from time to time.
4. Call the people to ensure that they are willing to help your child if needed. Make sure the child tells them the code word and is reassured that, when the word is given, the adult will drop what they're doing to listen. Discuss contingency plans with that person privately if necessary.
5. Make "dates" for your child with each support person from time to time, so they have regular social contact and feel comfortable going to them.

Dialogue:

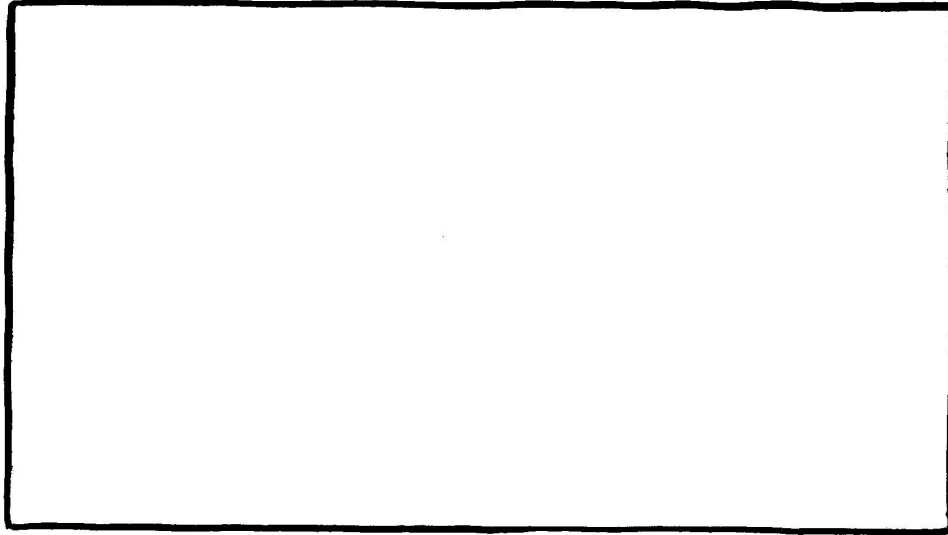
Tell your child that, while you will always do your best to be around for them, it's OK if they take their needs to other caring people when you can't help them.

You'll need:

Pencil, access to child's chosen support people.

Where I live now

This is the flag of the country where I live now



The country is called _____

The town I live in is called _____

Here's a picture of my family in our house:

Where I Live Now



Aim:

To help your child begin to understand the concepts of “here” and “there” (as opposed to “not here”), and “where.”

Parents:

Have your child draw the flag of the country where they live now. Add any symbols associated with that country (e.g., stars, crescents, special buildings, country shape). Draw your residence showing your family and pets.

Dialogue:

Talk about the country that you live in (e.g., name, what it’s known for, types of foods, and language). Talk also about other places the child might have lived.

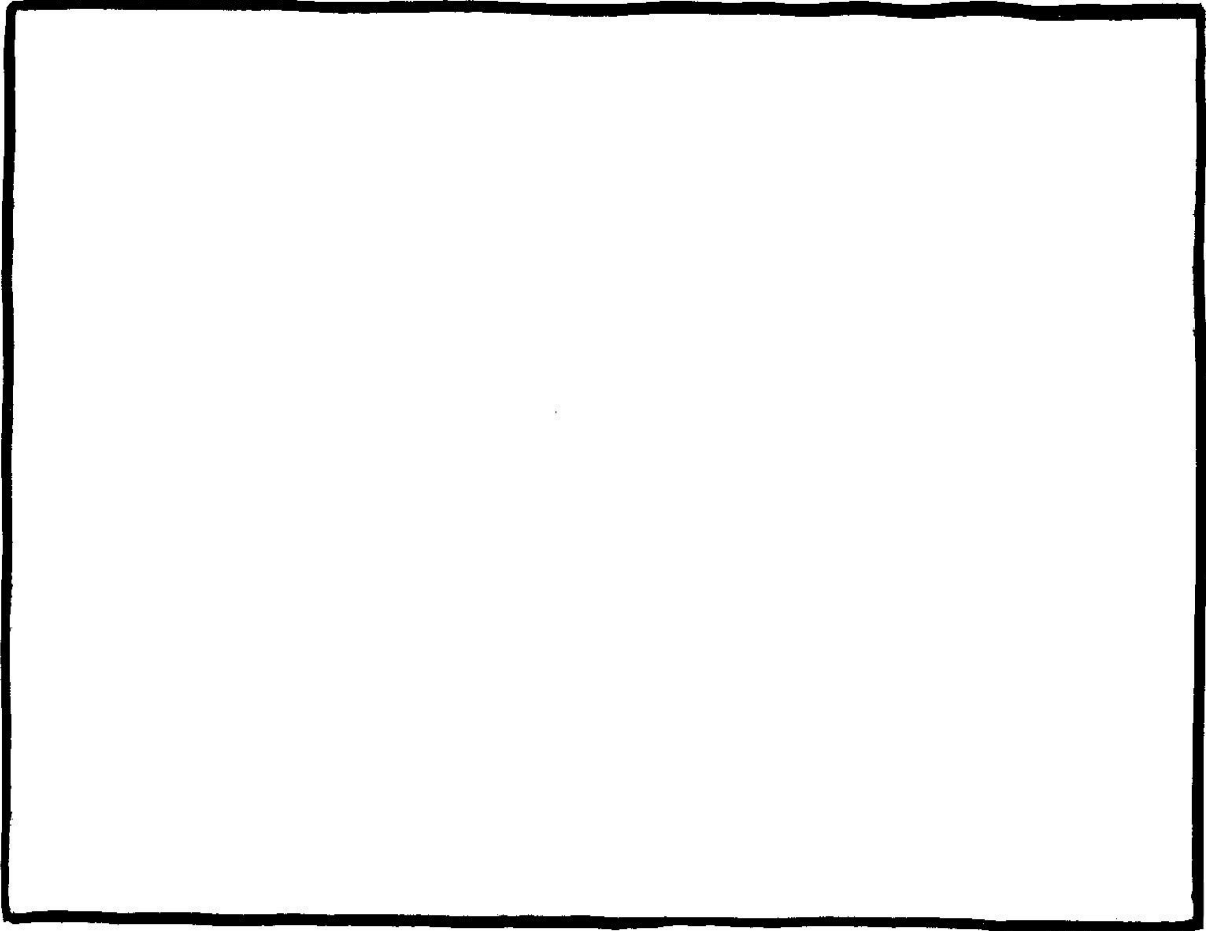
You’ll need:

Colors



Where _____ is going

This is the country flag.



Country name: _____

City name: _____

They speak: _____

Where Daddy/Mommy is Going

Aim:

To familiarize the child with general post information.

Parents:

Ask your child to draw and color the flag of the country where Dad/Mom is going. Fill in the questions at the bottom of the page. Draw symbols of the country (e.g., crescent, animals).

Further study: Look for more information and pictures of post at the local library, on the internet, etc.

Dialogue:

Talk about the post, and how different countries have different flags, languages, and customs. Reminisce about places where you've lived before as a way of making "there" and "here" more concrete.

You'll need:

Colors, post information (given by FLO or spouse).

Watch Me Grow

CHANGES	<u>TODAY'S DATE:</u>	<u>TODAY'S DATE:</u>	<u>TODAY'S DATE:</u>
Height			
Weight			
Hair length			
I can reach.. (object)			
New skill			



Place wrist here

Watch Me Grow



Aim:

To familiarize the child with the concepts of size and change; to introduce the notion that not all changes (like separation) are bad.

Parents:

The chart is to be filled at regular time intervals so you can all see how quickly your child is growing and changing. With the wrist on the line, trace your child's handprint and date it. In six months, use a different color to trace another handprint on top of the old one. Finally, when your family is reunited, repeat and trace your spouse's and your own hands.

Variation: You can do the same with footprints on a separate sheet. For fun, add a paw print of pet or favorite toy.

Dialogue:

Talk about change in general so the child realizes change is a normal part of life. Some of the changes they will face during separation will be tough, but other changes will not be difficult at all.

You'll need:

Colored markers.

My list for the Family Meeting



When is Daddy/Mommy going? _____

When is Daddy/Mommy coming back? _____

Will I see Daddy/Mommy again? _____

Two Things I'm most worried about:

Two things I can do while Daddy/Mommy is gone:

If we make a family time capsule, I would like to put in:

My List for the Family Meeting



Aim:

To include your child in family discussions about how the separation will be handled and what to expect.

Parents:

Give your child an opportunity to add his/her input into the Family Meeting by filling in the “list.” (Other family members will be making such lists too.) Allow her/him to “write” down their ideas; add a written translation later. Make a mental note of concerns – target these during the family meeting(s).

Dialogue:

Talk about the changes that the separation will bring. Ask about expectations, if any, and allow time for questions. In answering time or “when” questions, give activity or holiday markers rather than a calendar date, as dates are not as meaningful at this age (e.g., “seven sleeps,” “after your birthday,” or “before Thanksgiving”).

You’ll need:

Crayon, marker, or pencil.

Things to Do While Dad/Mom is away:



Where Daddy/Mommy lives Now

Numbers Everywhere!

Look at All the Letters

Colors of My World

Shapes

Times of My Life

Feelings

Needs

Special Times

Favorite Things

Things to Make and Send

Where _____ **lives now**

Where My Daddy/Mommy Lives Now



Aim:

To familiarize your child with a few more details about post and be able to picture the place where their parent lives.

Parents:

Have your spouse send a photo or describe where he/she lives now (e.g., a house, apartment building, compound). Look at details regarding trees, furnishings, colors, etc. Ask the child to draw a picture of Daddy/Mommy living in their “other” house.

Variation: Draw pictures about the animals, modes of transport, weather at post showing Daddy/Mommy in the picture.

Dialogue:

Talk about how people live in that country – how is it similar or different from your home? Mention how people get around, what the weather is like, etc.

You'll need:

Crayons, photos of post from your spouse.

Numbers Everywhere!

If you look carefully you'll find numbers everywhere!



On a race track.....



On a calculator or telephone.....

A photograph of an airport departures board. The board is a digital display with a black background and yellow and white text. It shows a list of flights with columns for Airline, Flight, Destination, Time, and Gate. The board is mounted on a wall with green horizontal blinds in the background.

AIRLINE	FLIGHT	DESTINATION	TIME	GATE
RYANAIR	104	LONDON-STN	BOARDING	20
DELTA	134	NEWYORK-JFK	11:35	7
CONTINENTAL	25	NEWYORK-EWR	11:40	
AER LINGUS	125	DUBLIN	13:10	
AMERICAN AI	7977	DUBLIN	13:10	
BRITISH AIR	8175	LONDON-LGW	13:20	
AER LINGUS	5465	LONDON-LGW	13:20	
AER LINGUS	376	LONDON-LHR	13:35	

At the airport
Can you find the numbers here?



Great!!

Now look around your house to see if you can find more numbers.

HINT: The kitchen is a good place to start.

Other Ways My Family Uses Numbers Every Day:

Calendars: There are 12 months in 1 year

There are about 4 weeks in 1 month

There are 7 days in 1 week

MONTH: _____

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

- I am _____ years old.
- My birthday is on the _____ day of the _____ month, called _____.

The best days for me to call Daddy/Mommy are _____
_____.

Numbers Everywhere: Calendar



Aim:

To reinforce number concepts. To associate Daddy/Mommy and family with meaningful numbers. The following numbers exercises (clock, phone) look at the usefulness of numbers rather than at counting per se. Start from numbers in the environment in general and end with a specific focus on numbers that are important to your family.

Parents:

Go around the house looking for numbers (cereal boxes, phones, clothes tags, shoe sizes, money, etc.). Then with the family calendar, look at numbers that symbolize dates (e.g., when Daddy/Mommy will call).

Variation: Have your child fill out their own calendar with numbers, drawing a phone symbol for days when Dad/Mom calls.

Dialogue:

Talk about how we use numbers; how useful and important they are in helping us sort, identify, and organize our lives. Show how using a calendar helps us count how many days until Dad/Mom comes home. Tell them that Dad/Mom also has one that helps him/her remember important things like calls, birthdays, and R&R.

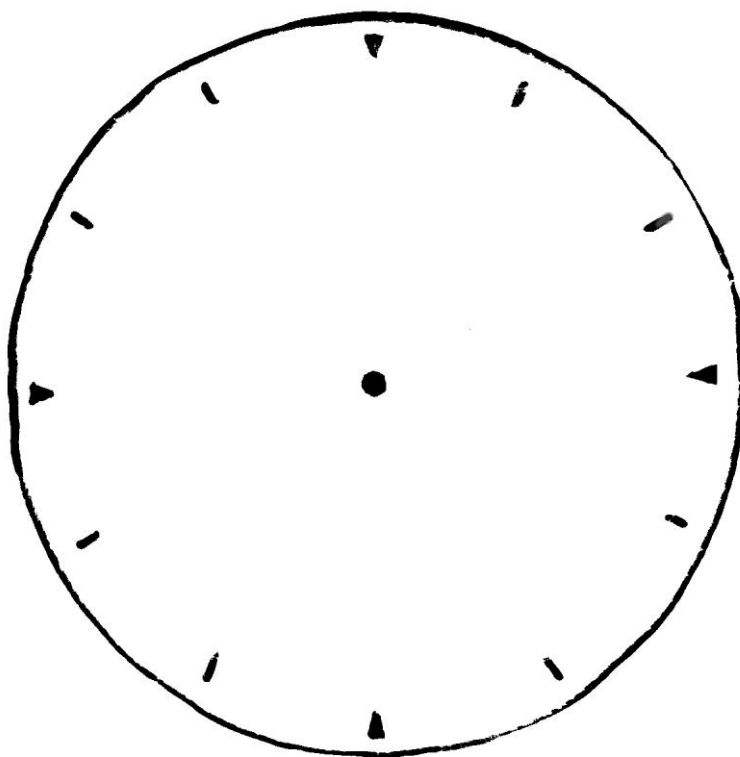
You'll need:

Pencil, calendar, colors.



CLOCK

This is the time when I talk on the phone



When it is daytime here, it is _____ where Daddy/Mommy is.

There is +/- _____ hours time difference between here and there.

Numbers Everywhere: Clock



Aim:

To reinforce number and time concepts; to associate Daddy/Mommy and family with meaningful numbers.

Parents:

Look at the different clocks in your house including analog and digital displays. Identify on the clock when Dad/Mom calls, connecting number symbols to time concept. Have your child draw in the hands indicating the time when Dad/Mom usually calls.

Dialogue:

Discuss time concepts (e.g., how numbers appear on a clock and represent hours, minutes, and seconds, day time vs. night time). Talk about time differences between home and post.

You'll need:

Pencil, colors, clock.



Times of My Life

Things I do at different times of day:

Breakfast Time: ___ o'clock

Naptime: ___ o'clock

Bath time: ___ o'clock

Bedtime: ___ o'clock

Times of My Life



Aim:

To build the concept of time and how it is used to order our day.

Parents:

Ask your child to draw a small picture of him/herself doing the specified activity or an item associated with it (e.g., toothbrush, towel for bath time). Say what time it's usually done.

Dialogue:

Talk about different times of day (e.g., how the sun is up at breakfast and going down at dinnertime or bedtime). Also, talk about other times such as going to Grandma's, Sunday school, their lunchtime, or time at Kindergarten.

You'll need:

Pencil, colors.

Telephone



Look around your house to see what kinds of telephones there are. They may look very different, but they all have numbers on them! Draw them here.

My home phone number is: _____

Daddy/Mommy's phone is: _____

In an emergency, call: _____
Name number

Numbers Everywhere: Telephone



Aim:

To reinforce number concepts, to associate Daddy/Mommy and family with meaningful numbers. To field questions about emergency numbers and how to phone home.

Parents:

Look at the phone, identify the numbers (note the letters too). Ask your child to write down your home phone numbers and Dad/Mom's number. Show him/her how to dial a number. Have him/her draw your telephone.

Suggestion:

Occasionally have an emergency drill where your child has to demonstrate where to find important numbers, how to dial them, and how to ask for help.

Dialogue:

Talk about numbers that help identify which phone and person to call. Integrate discussion with concept of time and time differences between home and post (refer to previous pages and to your calendar). Discuss use of emergency numbers.

You'll need:

Pencil, colors, telephone.

Look at All the Letters!

You don't need to read to be able to find the words among the letters below.

D G T J C A T K P

K W X M O M M Y

D A D D Y F T L M

G Y T A H O M E

S C O O B Y M I L K

DADDY

HOME

MOMMY

MILK

DOG

CAT

Look at All the Letters: Word Search



Aim:

To reinforce letter recognition.

Parents:

Help your child find the words in the puzzle (reading across, left to right).

Variation: Make up your own word search puzzles in a language of your choice either on paper or on a computer. Devise a list of seven items. Write those items randomly within a square, fill in the rest of the square with random letters.

Dialogue:

Praise your child as she/he finds each word. Point out easy ways of recognizing groups of letters (e.g., 'dd', 'mm', 'oo').

You'll need:

Pencil (optional: ruler)

M-O-M-M-y!

Mommy's name is _____

Mommy likes _____

The best thing I like about Mommy is _____

She smells like _____

When I next see her _____

Look at All the Letters: Mommy



Aim:

To reinforce letter recognition.

Parents:

Have your child color in the letters, draw a picture of Mom and me, and ask the questions (recording their answers). Send to spouse.

Variation: Repeat activity with names of other family members, pets, relatives, or friends.

Dialogue:

Use the opportunity to talk about Daddy/Mommy's name (e.g., spelling, how the name was given). Talk about how letters help us to communicate ideas.

You'll need:

Colors

D-a-d-d-y

Daddy's name is _____

Daddy likes _____

The best thing I like about Daddy is _____

He smells like _____

When I next see him _____

Look at All the Letters: Daddy



Aim:

To reinforce letter recognition.

Parents:

Have your child color in the letters, draw a picture of Dad and me, ask the questions and record their answers. Send to spouse.

Variation: Repeat activity with names of other family members, pets, relatives, or friends.

Dialogue:

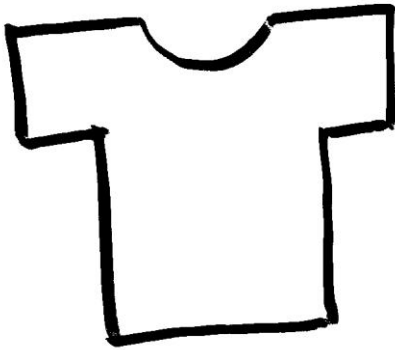
Use the opportunity to talk about Daddy/Mommy's name (e.g., spelling, how the name was given, etc.). Talk about how letters help us to communicate ideas.

You'll need:

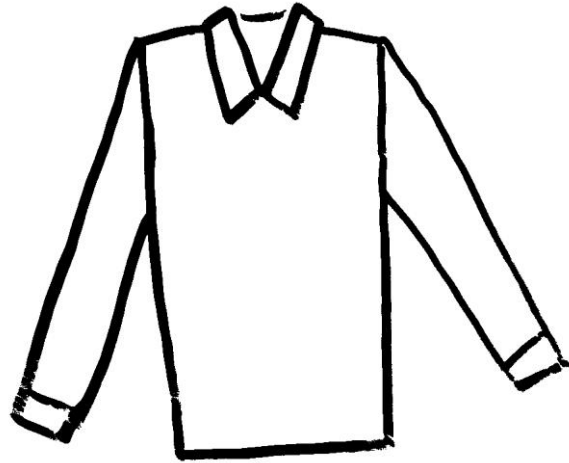
Colors

Color Me

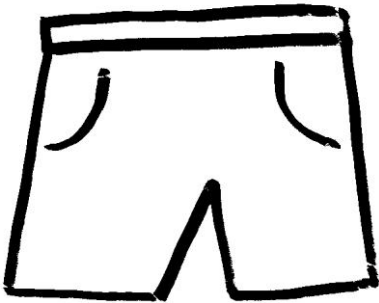
Clothes:



T-Shirt

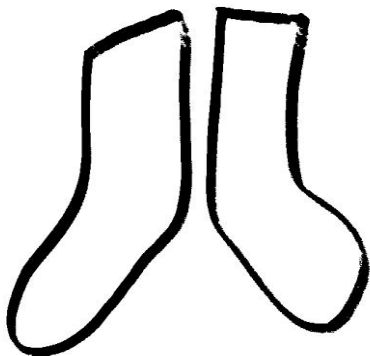


Shirt

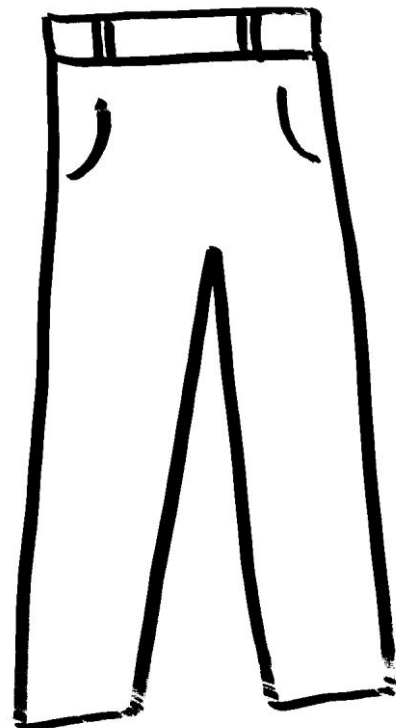


Shorts

Pants



Socks



Color Me: Clothes



Aim:

To reinforce color concepts and associate colors with everyday items.

Parents:

Open your closet door and name the colors that meet the eye. Ask your child to color the items on the sheet, using Dad/Mom's clothes if available.

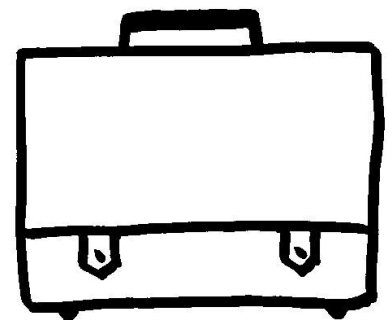
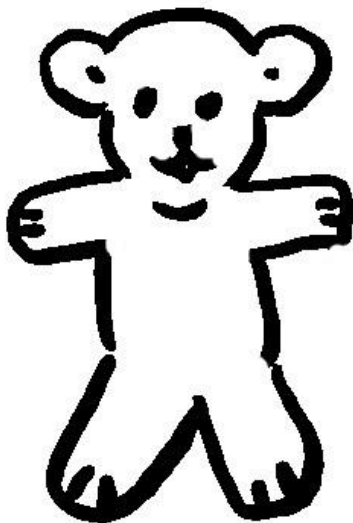
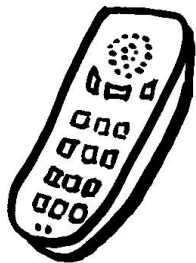
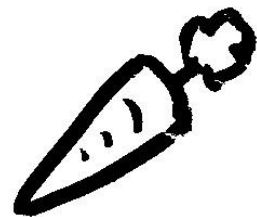
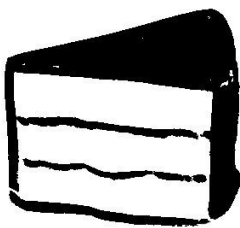
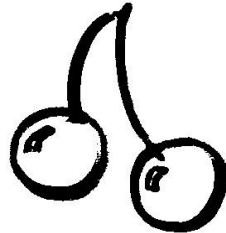
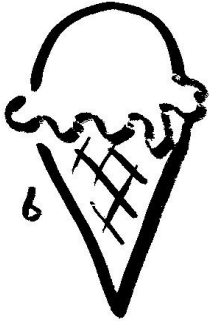
Dialogue:

Talk about how different members of the family tend towards certain colors of clothing. Colors can represent our tastes and moods as well as describe an item.

You'll need:

Colors, some of Dad/Mom's clothes.

Color Me



Color Me



Aim:

To reinforce colors in everyday items.

Parents:

Look around in the house and comment on all the different colors, including dark/light variations with the same color group. Ask your child to color the items on the sheet referring to real objects when possible.

Variation:

1. Ask your child which colors identifies with certain things or moods (e.g., red often connotes anger). On a separate sheet, make a chart showing colors and what they represent to your child using his/her own words (e.g., light blue means soft, brown suggests itchy, etc.).
2. Look at photos of post sent by your spouse. Ask your child to identify the many colors at post making note of larger differences (e.g., “is it greener where you live or at post?”).
3. Divide a separate sheet into four quadrants. Draw the colors of the seasons where you live. If your region does not have much seasonal variation, draw colors associated with seasonal holidays.

Dialogue:

Talk about how colorful our world is and how colors describe things.

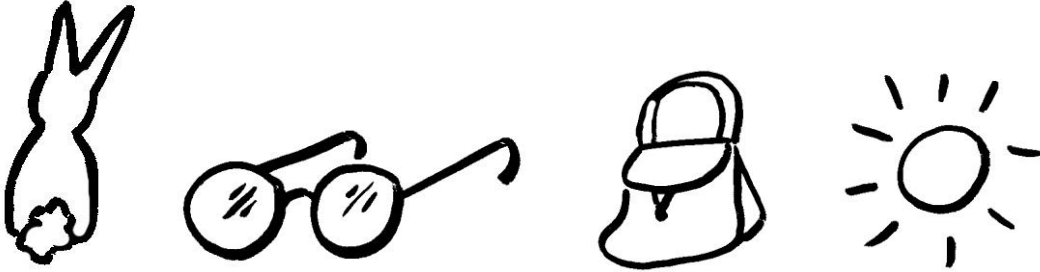
You'll need:

Colors, photos from post, some of Dad/Mom's clothes.

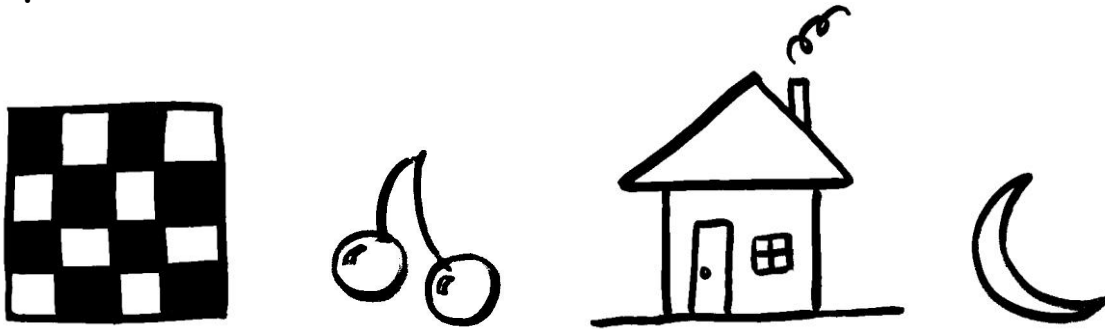
Shapes

Find and Color in the Shapes

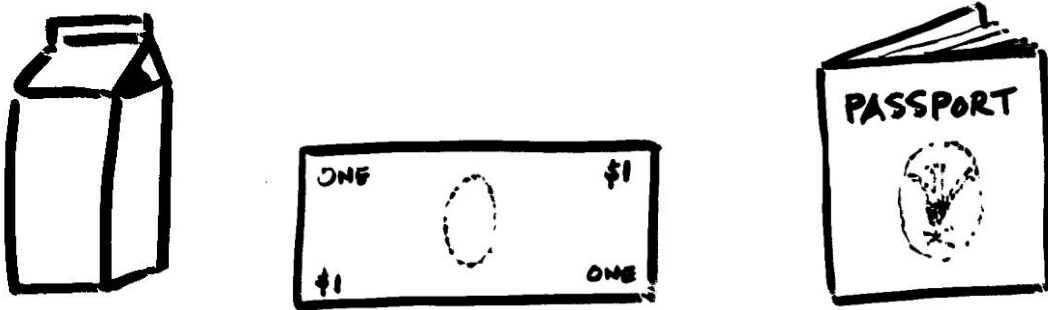
Circle:



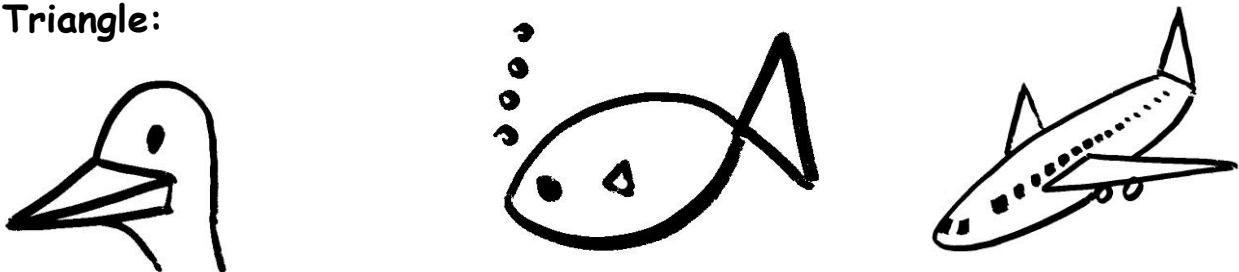
Square:



Rectangle:



Triangle:



Shapes

Aims:

To reinforce shape recognition in every day objects.

Parents:

Ask your child to identify the shapes from among the items. Look around the house including Dad/Mom's things to see if she/he can find shapes.

Variation: Ask your spouse to send back photos of basic shapes at post (e.g., square windows, wheels, round lamps).

Dialogue:

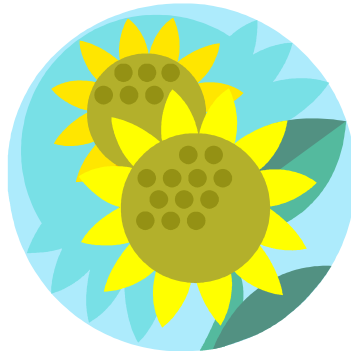
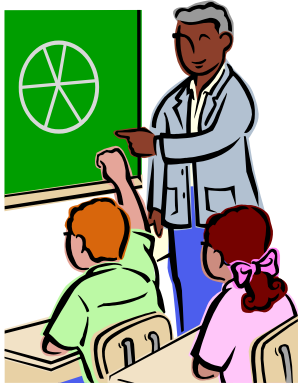
Shapes are everywhere. Praise her/him each time they find the shape.

You'll need:

Pencil

Shapes All Around Me

Find as many shapes as you can:



Shapes All Around Me



Aim:

To reinforce shape recognition in every day objects.

Parents:

Ask your child to identify as many different shapes as possible within one object. Encourage exploration beyond the whole object; look at details and find shapes within shapes.

Variation: Ask your spouse to send back photos of more intricate shapes at post (e.g., patterns on mosques, stacks of boxes, piles of oranges).

Dialogue:

Look at all the shapes within shapes. Praise her/him each time they find a shape.

You'll need:

Pencil

The Shape of Me

The Shape of Me



Aim:

To send a tangible reminder of your child to Dad/Mom.

Parents:

Trace the outline of your child's profile with as much detail as possible. Stick the page to a wall at exactly your child's head height. Position a lamp so that it shines on one side of your child's face, casting a shadow of their profile on the paper. Trace the shadow, eyelashes and all. Depending on how far the child is standing away from the wall, you might be able to fit only the face. Use a larger sheet if you'd like the whole head (black construction paper works well). Cut out the silhouette, have your child write a short message to Dad/Mom on it. Date and send to post.

Variation: Have your child lay down on a very large piece of paper, "waving" to Dad/Mom. Trace her/his outline.

Dialogue:

Talk about how we all have different shapes and sizes (tall, short, fat, thin). Wonder out loud at how your child's shape has changed over the years since babyhood; emphasize that even though their appearance has changed, they're still the same person. Wonder together at how Dad/Mom's appearance might change before they return.

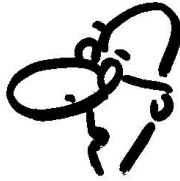
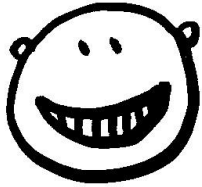
You'll need:

Removable tape, marker, lamp (optional: large black construction paper or packing paper)

Feelings

Circle the faces that look....

Happy:



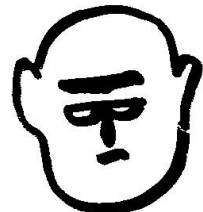
Times when I feel happy: _____

Worried:



I feel worried when _____

Sad:



I feel sad when _____

Feelings. Page 1

Aim:

To identify feelings in general and help your child become familiar with discussing them.

Parents:

Help your child identify and name the different emotions on the sheet. Ask him/her to circle the picture and to make the face him/herself.

Dialogue:

Talk about feelings in general. Dialogue suggestions continue on “Feelings” (Page 2 sheet).

You'll need:

Pencil.

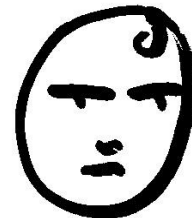
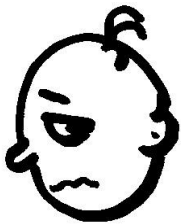
Feelings: Circle the faces that look....

Scared:

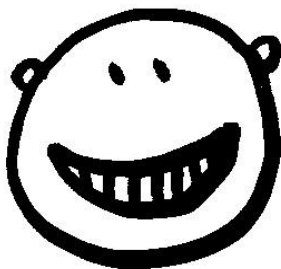


I'm scared when _____

Angry:



I get really angry when _____



When I'm happy, I _____ When I'm sad I _____

Feelings: Page 2

Aim:

To identify feelings in general and to get used to talking about them.

Parents:

Help your child identify and name the different emotions on the sheet; ask him/her to circle the picture and to make the face him/herself. Show what your happy/sad/mad face looks like. Say how we can express our emotions with our words as well as our faces.

Dialogue:

In talking about feelings, convey that all people have both pleasant and unpleasant feelings, and feelings in themselves are not 'good' or 'bad.' One is not 'bad' just because one feels an unpleasant emotion such as anger or guilt (problems do not come from feelings per se but in what one *does* with feelings).

You'll need:

Pencil

MY FEELINGS



Other words I use when I'm....

Angry: _____

Happy: _____

Hurt: _____

Afraid or nervous: _____

Sad: _____

My Feelings

Aim:

To identify specific feelings and get used to talking about them.

Parents:

Help your child list particular ‘feelings’ words used in your family in the appropriate category, e.g., mad, angry, blue, fraidy, ikky.

Variation: If your child cannot identify emotions per se, start with behaviors or phrases that communicate emotion, e.g., “no fair” might indicate frustration or jealousy; pouting might mean “I’m mad at you.”

Dialogue: In talking about feelings, introduce the idea of emotional range by discussing a range of words within one feeling group, e.g., ‘angry’ might also include annoyed, bothered, frustrated, or irritated.

You’ll need:

Pencil



Naughty!



I don't like _____

I'm naughty when _____

Mommy (or at-home parent) is naughty when _____

Sometimes this happens if I'm naughty _____

When I'm good, the best thing that happens is _____

Date _____

Naughty!

Aim:

Become familiar with what your child defines as “naughty” and “good”.

Parents: Ask the questions; write down their answers verbatim. Have them draw a “bad” scene or memory, if they can, talk about what happened. Make a mental note of differences between what she/he thinks is naughty, and how *you* define naughty. Later discuss your child’s moral development with spouse. ([Remember that at this age, children tend to define good and bad according to compliance with rules, and what meets parental approval.)

Dialogue:

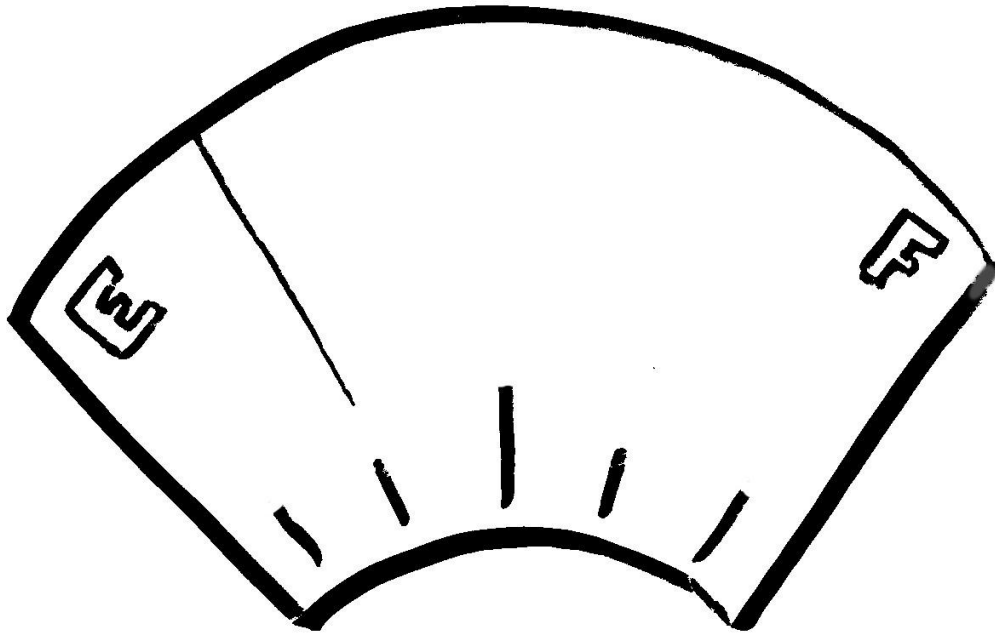
Ask if they have any worries; reinforce that they can always come to you, no matter how bad they feel or how bad the behavior.

You’ll need:

Pencil.

Needs

I need love to be my best!



When my love tank nears empty, I need to ask for a hug!

These are some ways to fill me with love:

Needs: Love Tank



Aim:

To introduce regulation and communication of needs; to help both child and parent to recognize and fill needs before reaching crisis point.

Parents:

If you have a car, look at its fuel gauge with your child, pointing out the E for Empty and F for full status. Explain how fuel or gas is needed to make the car run properly and how the fuel indicator helps us to know when the car needs more gas. Convey that the same concept applies to children's need for love and attention. Ask him/her to color in the activity sheet, personalizing the tank and type of "fuel" to his/her own needs (e.g., some children like hugs, others prefer to sit side by side – ask your child what they find the most loving).

Ideally, you want him/her to come to you for regular emotional refueling when a few minutes spent cuddling can stave off larger troubles that would otherwise require more involved intervention. Just as you would take preventative measures with your car to make sure you don't run out of gas, from time to time, ask you child "How's your tank?" Expect that it will take a while for your child to realistically identify his/her own internal state. Help him/her over time to tell the difference between urgent and non-urgent needs.

Dialogue:

Talk about taking care of needs before they develop into problems. Verbal "tank" indicators will give important cues to when your child needs love. Choose verbal tank indicators "Full, Medium, Getting Low, or Empty", or have your child pick their own words that mean the same thing (e.g., half tank, fumes, etc.). Both you and your child can use these words to assess how they are doing at any given time. Identify what each term actually looks like for the child, e.g., "fumes" means a meltdown is imminent; "getting low" means he/she needs attention and is likely to be whiney or interrupting a lot. Recommend that they come to you when they are at "half tank" for hugs and cuddles.

You'll need:

Colors (e.g., red for empty zone.)

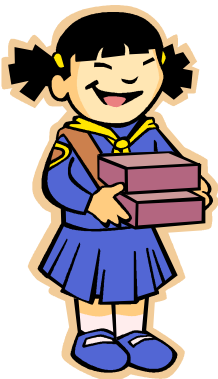
My Treasure Box



Make a treasure box to hold the special things sent from far away.

Steps: (You'll need some help with these)

1. Find a box with a lid, like a shoe box.
2. Color or paint the outside if you want to.
3. Add your favorite stickers on it.
4. Put in things that Daddy or Mommy sent you and you're finished!



Things to Make: Treasure Box



Aim:

To make a special container for the things Dad/Mom sends from post.

Parents:

The things that the employee sends from post will indeed be exotic, treasured items to your child. Assist in gathering materials and creating his/her own treasure box. Ponder each precious item as it's placed in the finished box.

Hint: It doesn't have to be a box. You can also use see-through pocket inserts for this binder, or one of Daddy/Mommy's bags that has lots of pockets, even a pillowcase with a series of ziploc's.

Dialogue:

Talk about the treasures Daddy/Mommy has taken the time to find and send especially to your child. Examine details and ask what her/she thinks the item was used for in that country.

You'll need:

A closeable container. Something to decorate with: acrylic paints, brushes, stickers, markers. Items sent from post (e.g., A-B-C, 1-2-3 flash cards, local currency, shells, embassy memorabilia).

Our Own Holiday!

If I could make a holiday I would call it _____

It would be for _____

Decorations I would have _____

Special food I would like to have _____

Special things to do that day _____

Things to Make/Do: 'Our Own Holiday!'



Aim:

To have fun. Use as a pick-me-up when the family is feeling stressed or in need of special time off together.

Parents:

Use the ideas generated in this page when you sense the family needing some decompression time together, perhaps in between R&Rs and other holidays, or as a reward that the whole family can look forward to. Ask your child for their idea of what makes up a holiday; ask her/him to draw a picture of it.

Suggestions: Kids Day (like Mother's and Father's Day), Family Heritage Day, Bad Hair and Pajama Day, Pet's birthday.

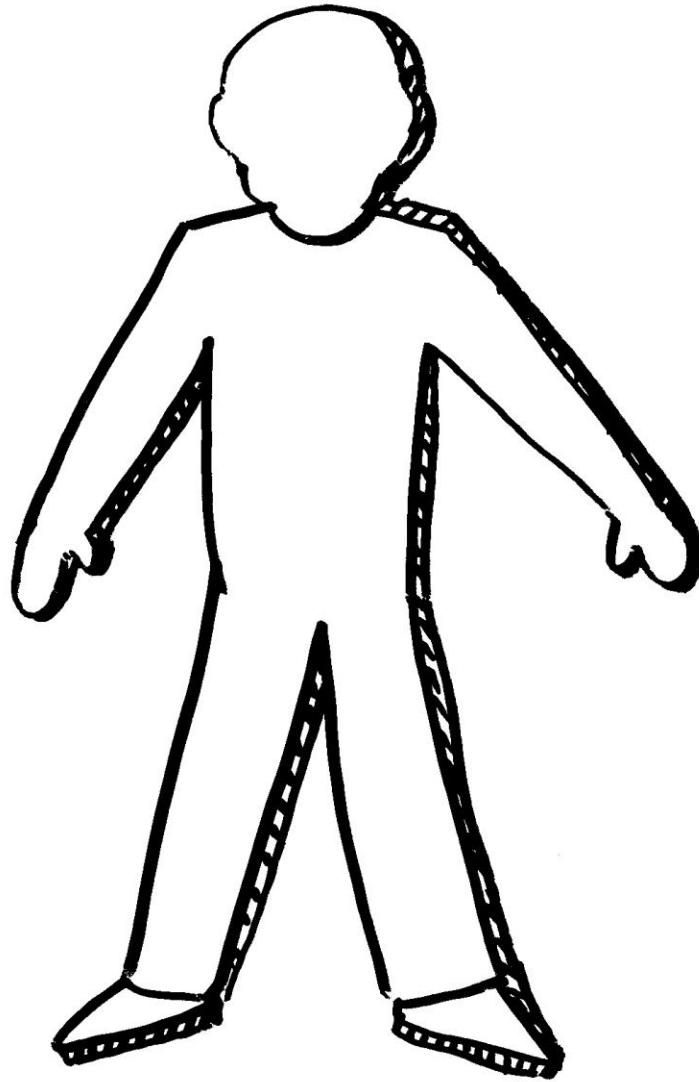
Dialogue:

Talk about special family holidays together, reminisce about what happened – who was there, what you did, what you ate, the weather, etc. Discuss what elements make up a holiday or special day, including family time together, time off from work and school, special food and decorations. Sometimes presents and rituals are involved. Pick up on some of your child's (plus other family members' ideas) and set a date!

You'll need:

Colors, ideas. Pick a date and make necessary arrangements to create your unique family holiday. Encourage all family members to get involved in making it special.

Things to make and Send: Flat Me



Dear _____ ,

Have you ever read the story about Flat Stanley? He was a boy who had all kinds of adventures after he was squashed flat by a picture. He flew like a kite, helped catch thieves at a museum, and he rescued a ring that went down a drain!

Let me introduce you to Flat Me, actually named _____. Don't worry, I didn't *really* get squished. Please take 'me' with you sometimes and tell me what's going on where you are. I'm very small and flat so I won't take up too much room in your pocket or bag, I'd just like to be with you! Thanks for taking care of me!

Love, _____

Things to Make and Send: Bi-lateral Activity: Flat Me



Aim:

To engage your child's imagination in shared adventures with Dad/Mom in far off lands and to provide periodic reminders that she/he is in Dad/Mom's thoughts throughout the day.

Parents:

As this activity is inspired by the story of Flat Stanley¹, it would be fun to start off by reading the story. Ask the child to color in the template, making it look like him/herself, name it Flat [Child's Name]. Additional templates are provided in the back of the manual if needed. Stick to blank side of index card, cut out silhouette.

Ask your child to sign the note and send it with Flat Me to Dad/Mom at post. Instruct your spouse to send back "Adventures of Flat Me" reports every so often via e-mail. They do not need to be elaborate: merely taking a photo of Flat Me with Dad/Mom doing mundane things at different times at post will be thrilling enough when accompanied by the brief explanation of the photo.

HINT: In case of uncontrollable circumstances such as getting lost in the mail or damaged, make a color photo copy of Flat Me before sending the original. Use the template to make a replacement on the sly, if needed. Remind the employee to bring Flat Me home again!

Dialogue:

Discuss the Flat Stanley story while making Flat Me. Talk about other favorite stories and/or adventures you've had together.

You'll need:

Scissors, one 4x6" index card, glue, colors. Print out and collect e-mailed photos and adventures.

¹ Jeff Brown (1964) *Flat Stanley*, Harper & Row Publishers, Inc. New York. Illustrations by Tomi Ungerer, 1974.

Favorite Things

These are a few of my favorite, favorite, favorite things:

I like to eat: _____

I like to drink: _____

My favorite toy: _____

My favorite game to play is: _____

My favorite time of day is: _____

My favorite thing about you is: _____

I LOVE YOU!

Things to Make and Send: Favorite Things



Aim:

To keep the employee current on your child's interests.

Parents:

Ask your child the questions, write the answers. The "you" in last question refers to Daddy/Mommy. Have them draw a picture of themselves with a favored item, at the favorite time of day, with Daddy/Mommy.

Dialogue:

Talk about liking and disliking things, note that it's OK to like some things more than other things. Reassure that when it comes to loving people, we can love more than one person and love doesn't "run out."

You'll need:

Colors. Send to spouse at post!

Happy Birthday!!



Things to Make and Send *Seasonal Pages: Happy Birthday*



Aim:

To share family highlights with spouse at post.

Parents:

Your child uses this sheet to write and draw her/his birthday message to Dad/Mom. When complete, delegate her/him to put it in the mail.

Variations: Make similar pages about family holidays and events that your spouse might miss, e.g., Mother's/Father's Day, Thanksgiving, and seasonal holidays.

Dialogue:

Talk about the sentiments of greeting cards and the extra things we do to show thoughtfulness during the times when Dad/Mom is most likely to miss family. Praise your child for making the effort to share their warm thoughts of Dad/Mom.

You'll need:

Colors. Optional: Stickers, glitter, photos, tape or glue.

I Went to the Dentist



I Mith You!

Things to Make and Send: *Personal Pages: I Went to the Dentist*



Aim:

To share your child's everyday highlights with spouse at post.

Parents:

Ask your child to draw a picture about going to the dentist or losing a tooth. Add a sentence describing what happened. Stick on a photo or any memorabilia of that occasion you might still have (e.g., brochure pictures, receipts). Send to spouse - ask him/her to collect the pages and bring them home at the end of tour.

Variations: Make similar pages about one theme. Starting with hints about where, what you did, who was there etc, let the child fill in with recollections. Add any ticket stubs or other items of interest.

Suggestions:

I was sick...	We went camping...
I went to the movie...	Day with Grandma...
Day care...	Big storm on our Street...
Play group pals...	Dog days (pets)...
My big bandaid/boo-boo...	My best friend...

Dialogue:

Talk about what happened at that event. Reinforce how many different things your child has done and seen, and how well they remember things. Say how special times are mingled together with "ordinary" days, that sad days (like missing Dad/Mom times) don't last forever.

You'll need:

Colors. Pictures (memorabilia optional)



I LOVE YOU!!



Things to Make and Send: 'I LOVE YOU' Sign



Aim:

To make and send a cheerful note for Dad/Mom

Parents:

Have your child write, draw, or doodle anything they want that conveys his/her love to your spouse. Add lip prints using Mom's lipstick and a photo if possible. Ask the child to put it in the envelope, seal with a kiss, and send to post.

Variations: Signs and awards like this are easy, quick, and fun to make. You can facilitate it by printing a title/theme from the computer and your child does the rest. They can add pictures or letters cut out from old magazines for fun.

Suggested Titles:

I'm So Proud of You
I Miss You
Thanks for a Great R&R
You're Coming Home Soon
Best E-Mailer
Most On-Time Phone Calls Award
Bravest Dad/Mom

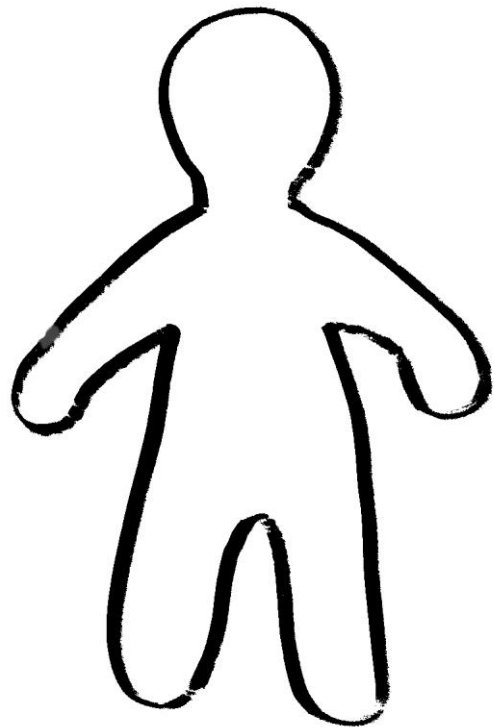
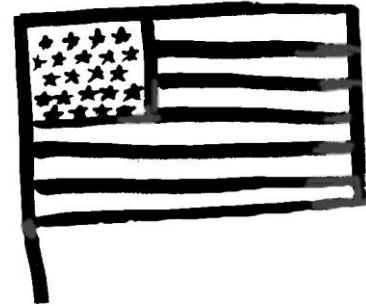
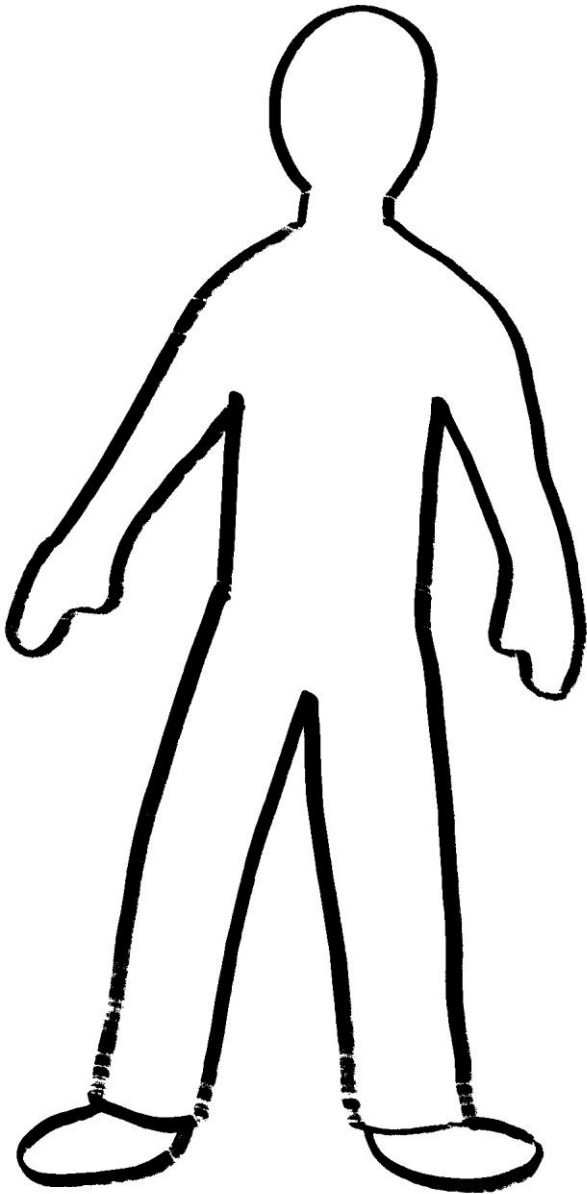
Dialogue: Talk about how happy Dad/Mom will be to receive this special message, it will definitely brighten up the day.

You'll need:

Colors, lipstick. Optional: old magazines, glue

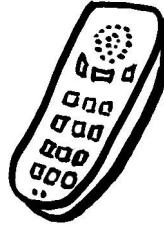
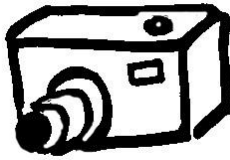
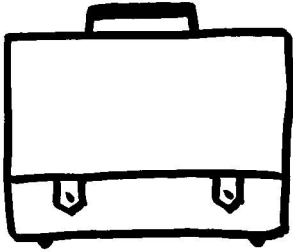
Things to Play with Family:

Paper Me, Paper Dad, Paper Mom in Paper World

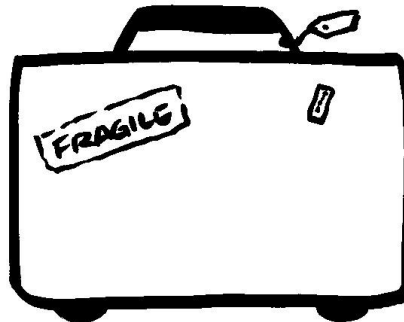
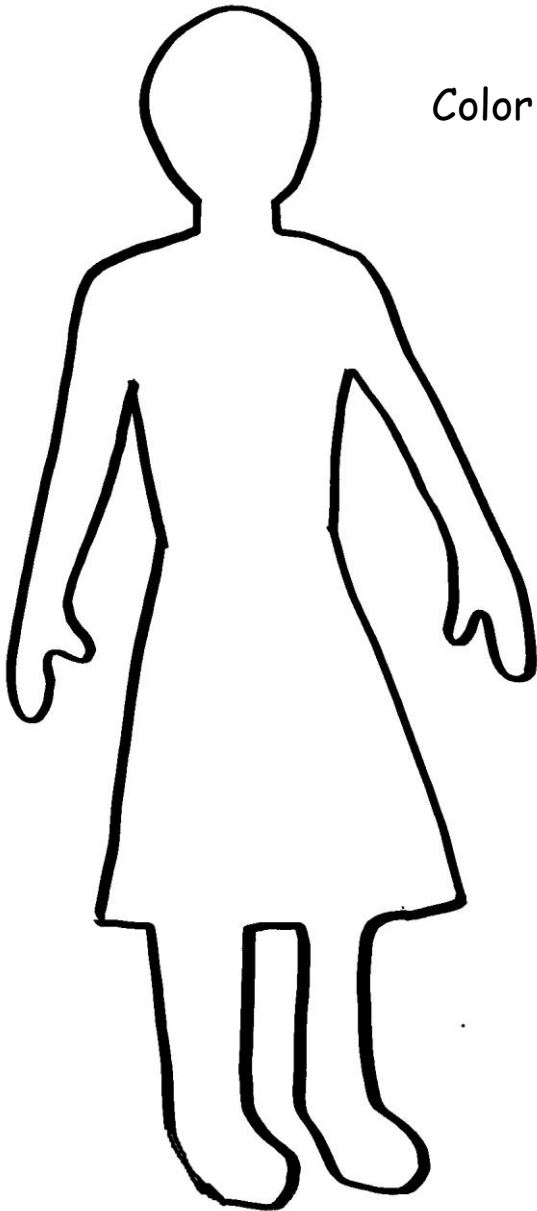


Things to Play with Family (cont'd)

Paper me, paper Dad, paper Mom in a paper World



Color and cut out paper Daddy,
Mommy and me



Paper World

Aim:

To encourage family play themes.

Parents:

This “free form” activity asks your child to create a paper world for the figures, preferably out of interesting paper sent from post. Color and cut out the figures. Glue to 4x6” index card for sturdiness and cut out silhouette. (Extra figure template provided in Templates section.)

Suggestions for Paper World:

1. Make a 3-dimensional house out of a box, with paper walls to make rooms.
2. Draw a house and surrounding town on a large piece of paper, showing roads and other buildings in town; include an airport, school, hospital, and place of work.
3. Draw another town that represents Dad/Mom’s place on a separate large paper, showing the airport, place of work and Dad/Mom’s house. Use paper sent from post for different buildings.

Variation: Cut out silhouettes of family members, glue them to cardstock for added strength (see Parent Manual Appendix B for photo sculptures).

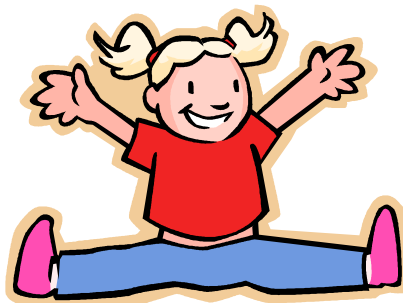
Dialogue:

Play! Watch how your child role-plays family relationships. If necessary, bring up themes of conflict or concern in later conversation.

You’ll need:

4 x 6 index cards, scissors, glue, extra paper, paper sent from post, tape, and imagination!

Things to Do For Homecoming!



Before Dad/Mom arrives:

Welcome Home Banner

New Words, New Skills

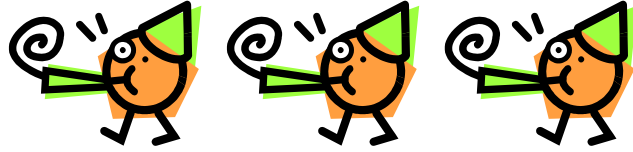
Things I want to Do When We're Together Again

After Dad/Mom comes Home

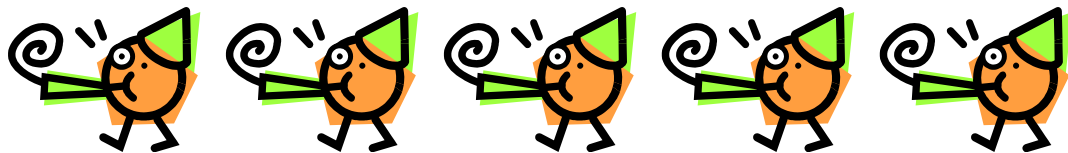
I Wonder

Reminders

Family Reunion Meeting



WELCOME HOME!!!!



To Do Before Homecoming:

'Welcome Home' Banner



Aim:

To include your child on homecoming preparations and celebrations.

Parents:

Child decorates the page with colorful, welcoming doo-dads. Hang it up in a prominent place just before arrival. Invite child to make other decorations like paper chains.

Variation: Draw a “*You’re Coming Home Soon*” banner, send to post in the last month of separation.

Dialogue:

Talk about homecoming and celebration plans. Assign certain tasks she/he can do easily both at arrival and later, at the homecoming celebration, e.g., carry Daddy/Mommy’s coat, set the table.

You’ll need:

Colors, tape. Optional: stickers, glitter, extra paper for other decorations.

Things I Want to Do When We're Together Again

I'm looking forward to:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

To Do One Week Before Homecoming:

Things I Want to Do with Daddy/Mommy



Aim:

To determine your child's ideas and wishes about homecoming.

Parents:

Ask your child what are the most important things she/he wants to do with Dad/Mom within the first few weeks of arrival. Allow her/him to choose one-on-one or group activities, or both. Write them down and ask your child to draw a picture of Dad/Mom doing one of these activities with him/her.

Dialogue:

Talk about homecoming, taking note of your child's expectations. From time to time, while exploring their wishes, interject reality without dampening his/her spirits about the things he/she anticipates doing. Now that it's clearer what activities are important to the child, say that you and Dad/Mom will find the best possible time when Dad/Mom can pay full attention.

You'll need:

Colors

New Skills

Look at how I've changed and grown!

Things I know that I didn't know before:

Things that I can do now!

To Complete Before Homecoming and Show To Parent After His/Her Return:

New Skills



Aim:

To show Dad/Mom new developments since he/she left, to build a sense of mastery of knowledge and physical skills.

Parents:

Ask your child to think about a) new things they've learned, and b) new skills acquired since Dad/Mom left. Draw a picture in space provided. Remember behavioral skills are just as important as academic skills at this age, e.g. "I can do the dishes by myself now" will figure as large as "I can add two-digit numbers".

Variations:

1. If short on newly acquired skills, show increments of growth, e.g., "You can read chapter books without pictures now. Before you only read stories with big pictures."
2. If your child has idiosyncratic speech or words made up by combining two languages, make a list of the words he/she says and provide translation, e.g., "yai-yai" means "naughty", "haati moo" means "elephant."

Dialogue:

Any new skill is praise worthy. Talk about how much your child has learned and accomplished over the past year. Point out how they get better at newly acquired skills each time they're practiced.

Employee: Use this opportunity to talk about how things in the family are changing again now that you're home and can see how many more things your child can do for him/herself. Emphasize that even positive changes need adjustment periods for practice and getting things to work smoothly.

You'll need:

Pencil and colors


Reminders

Things to do with Daddy and Mommy:



Done (check)

 Draw my last hand print with Daddy and Mommy's

 Draw a picture of My Family Now

 Look at what I can do by myself now

 Do "I Wonder" list

 Put all the pages back in my binder

 Looking through my treasure box together

 Things I want to do with Daddy/Mommy

To Do 1-2 Weeks After Homecoming:

Reminders: Things to Do with Mom and Dad



Aim:

To provide the child with an opportunity to bring closure to the separation by reminiscing together over the good and not-so-good times.

Parents:

About 3-4 weeks after the employee's return, spend quiet one-on-one time when you can go over the Reminder List with your child. Allow her/him to check off items. Depending on how many items they have on the Reminder list to share, you will need more than one sitting -- plan on one or two activities per session.

Dialogue:

Talk about the themes in each activity, praise your child for having grown and done so well during the separation.

You'll need:

For the following pages in this manual:

- ⇒ My hand print with Daddy/Mommy's: add your handprints to the Watch Me Grow page.
- ⇒ My family now: on a separate piece of paper, the child draws a picture of the reunited family, insert this into binder.
- ⇒ Look at what I can do by myself now: go over 'New Skills' page.
- ⇒ I wonder: fill out the page together (instructions on back of sheet).
- ⇒ Help gather all the pages and complete this Dad/Mom and Me binder. Add photos.
- ⇒ Look through your child's treasure box together; tell stories about where the items came from.
- ⇒ Look at 'Things I Want to Do When We're Together' list, check off the ones you've done together.
- ⇒ Ask if she/he wants to modify the list; set times to complete the list if possible.

I Wonder I Wonder ..



Take turns with your parent to wonder what each other's "signals" really mean.

Daddy/Mommy fills in about me:

When You say/do.....	I wonder if it means....

I fill in about Daddy/Mommy:

When You say/do....	I wonder if it means....

To Do 2-4 Weeks Or More After Homecoming, For Returned Parent and Child:

I Wonder...



Aim:

To provide a venue to ask about potentially touchy feelings or behaviors, to explore each other's communication methods and clarify as needed.

Parents:

Write in some "signs" (words or actions) that you've noticed your child saying or doing that you don't quite understand. Wonder out loud what they mean and ask him/her to translate. Write down the answers. Allow him/her to ask the same of you by filling in the second section together.

Employee Note:

Whether you are aware of it or not, if you have been depressed, irritable or otherwise unavailable to your child since your return, he/she will pick up on it. This exercise presents an opportunity to address this openly and, hopefully, safely. Try not to become defensive or go into a guilt tailspin, neither of which will help your child. Instead, recognize that your moods, likely a residue from the separation, are understandably affecting your family. Even if you do not seek support for yourself now, encourage your child to talk with someone else until you are more able to be available.

Dialogue:

Talk about how people can't always tell what another person's actions mean. "Wonder" out loud about the meaning of actions or words you've noticed. In deciphering one another's moods this way, you are creating a way to talk about talking, introducing the idea that talking is preferable to acted out feelings that are easier to misconstrue. For example, if the "sign" is pouting or saying "I wish you'd go away again," wonder out loud "Do you really mean that you wish I never came home, or do you mean that all these changes since I came back are hard on you?"

You'll need:

Pencil.

My List for the Family Reunion Meeting

The best thing I like about Daddy/Mommy being home again is:

Two things that we did well while Daddy/Mommy was away:

1. _____

2. _____

2 things that are different now that Daddy/Mommy's home:

1. _____

2. _____

Some things I would like to change:

I go to Mommy for _____,

and I go to Daddy for _____.

Don't forget to open the Family Time Capsule!



To Do One Month After Homecoming:

My List for the Family Reunion Meeting



Aim:

To include your child in family discussions about adjustments to be made to family routines, responsibilities and schedules.

Parents:

Give your child an opportunity to add his/her input into the Family Meeting by filling in the list. (Other family members will be making such lists too.) Allow them to “write” down their ideas; you add a written translation later. Make a mental note of the things they seem most concerned about – target these concerns during the family meeting(s).

Don’t forget to incorporate the family activities and time capsule after the meeting!

Dialogue:

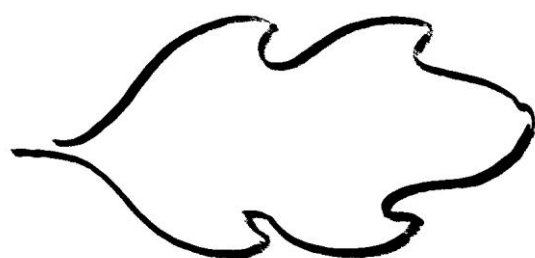
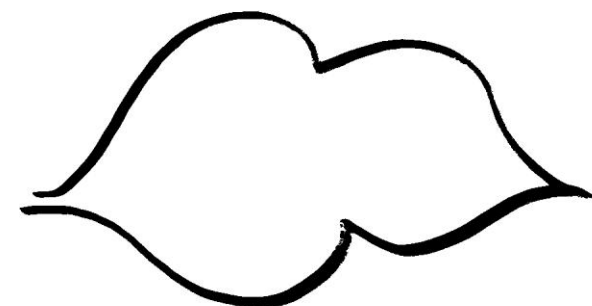
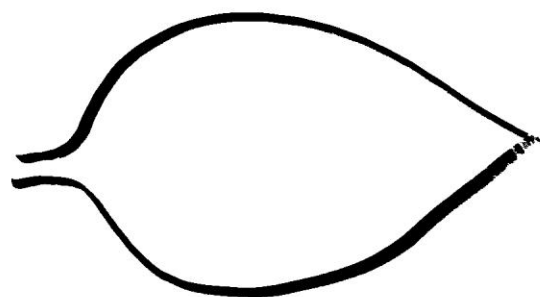
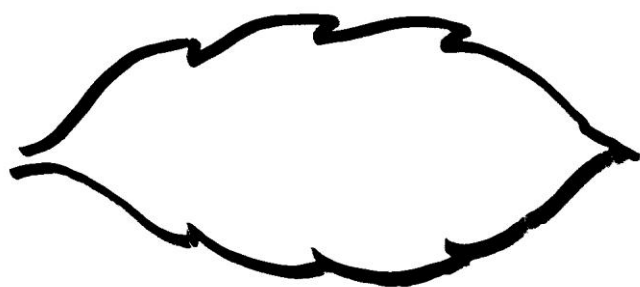
Talk about the how well they did with all the changes during the separation and discuss how things have changed again now that Dad/Mom has come home. Ask about their perceptions of changes, if any, and allow them to ask questions. Note any concerns and reassure that, in time, things will smooth out.

You’ll need:

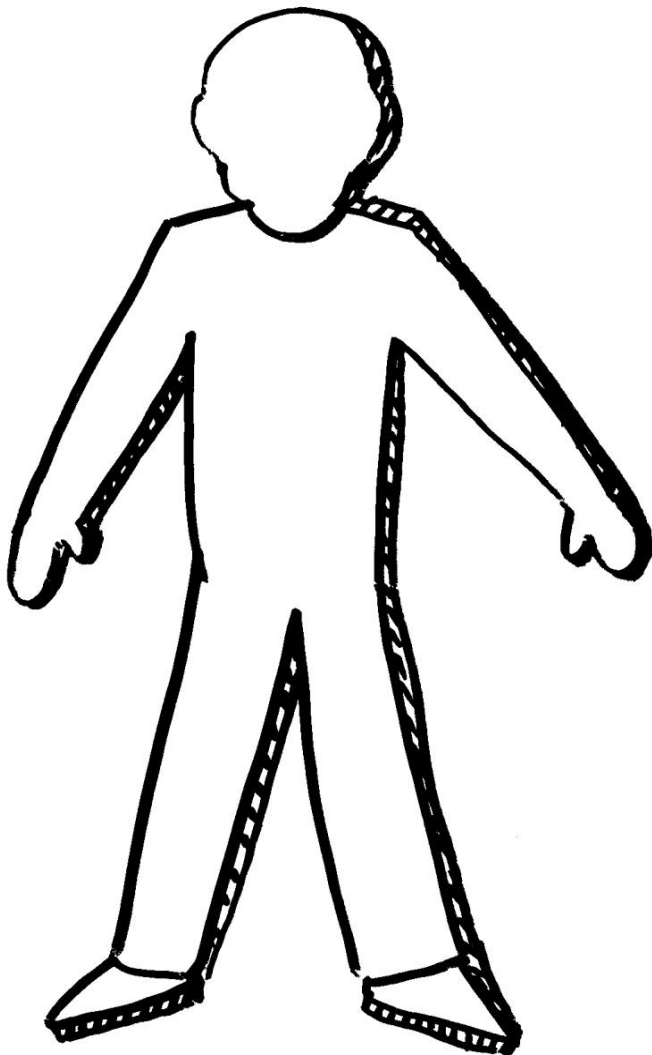
Pencil. Plan time for meeting(s)

Templates

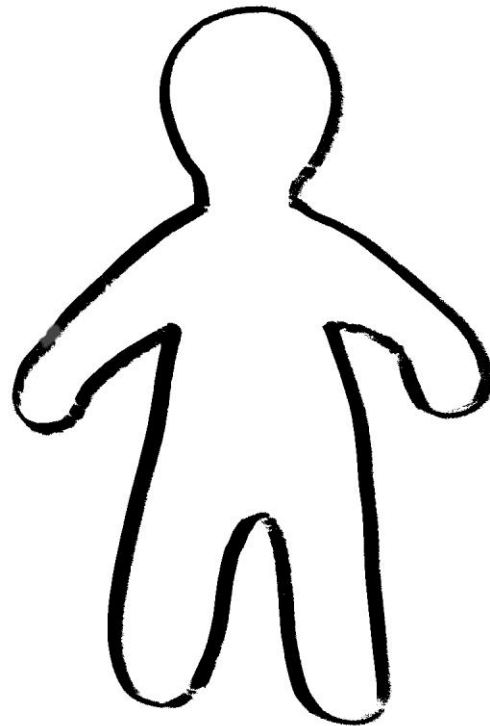
Family tree leaves, acorns



Flat Me template



Paper Me Template



Paper Mom

Paper Dad Templates

